

CARE

Continued from Page 1

we wait for someone else to tell us how to do this, we risk being forced into a regional model and we will face even bigger challenges having available resources to provide all cycles of health. My hope for this project is to improve pre and post hospital capabilities as well."

Mrs. Meyer indicated she was eager to join the task force to help make sure that all of the community voices are heard when considering our future with health care.

"We need to identify and fill the voids. There are gaps in our local health care that need to be considered."

The grants require that the improvement plans be based on data from community health assessments and performance evaluations of their healthcare systems.

"This is really an opportunity to have a very data-driven approach to looking at the long-term issues facing these health systems and to developing ideas for how to address them," said Kim Moore, president of the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, the Hutchinson-based foundation that is spearheading the initiative.

The Kansas Health Foundation, the Sunflower Foundation, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation, and the research arm of the Kansas Hospital Association also are providing funding.

The funders invited grant applications from "frontier" areas of the state - places where there are fewer than 10 people per square mile. Cheyenne County easily met the criteria with 2.4 residents per square mile.

"Our goal was to find four energetic, forward-thinking rural communities," Mr. Moore said. "We are very pleased with the results of our painstaking selection process."

There is no guarantee the groups selected for planning grants will get a second round of funding, officials said. Implementation grants of at least \$440,000 will only be awarded to groups that submit plans that have potential to take their health care systems



RURAL HEALTHCARE taskforce members met with Kansas Leadership Center coach Darrell Hamlin at the pilot project kick off meeting in Wichita, Kan. on October 25. Pictured left to right: Ryan Murray, Kary Meyer, Jen Padgett, Darrell Hamlin, Jeffrey Paulsen, Jan Pippett, Judy Rockwood, Mila Bandel and Reid Raile.

Herald staff photo by Carol Sloper

to higher performance levels.

"We're not limiting communities except to say that hiring one new health professional would not be a transitional or transformational change. We want something that really deals with the ongoing structure, the ongoing working environment and the culture of that health system," Mr. Moore said.

The funders are hoping that the grants will produce bold thinking about how to better integrate patient care in rural health systems, said Melissa Hungerford, vice-president of the Kansas Hospital Association. Today, she said, patients get lost even in small health care systems. Providers don't communicate to ensure the right kind of care is given at the right time in the right setting.

"This project will give communities the opportunity to figure out how to do that for their

residents," she said.

Greg Bonk, a health care consultant with HMS Associates in Getzville, N.Y., will spend time in Kansas over the next year working with the four planning groups to analyze data and help craft improvement plans that change the health care landscapes in the respective communities.

"They must be well informed about the need for change and about the design possibilities for new organizational and service relationships," Mr. Bonk said.

The counties that will be involved in the three-year pilot project are: Cheyenne, where the local coordinator will be Carol Sloper; a collaboration of Osborne, Phillips and Smith counties with local coordinator Christiane "Criquet" Cole; Clark County, including the Minneola and Ashland hospital districts, with coordinator Dr. Dan Shuman; and Kearney County, where the coordinator will be Heather Combs Platter.

KIDS

Continued from Page 1

listening to the firefighter, Michael Dorn, explain different fire safety techniques. There were smoke detectors throughout the "home" that sounded off so the kids could see and hear them.

The trailer has two doors that heat up so the students could feel with the back of their hand to see if they were warm. Michael explained to the children that if it is warm, you do not go through that door.

The kitchen had a pot on the stove with a fake flame in it made to look like a fire. Here the firefighters demonstrate how to put out a kitchen fire.

There is a bedroom on the second floor that is used show children how to respond if there is a fire downstairs in their home and

they need to escape. Children follow the firefighter's lead and escape through the window, go out onto the second floor patio, and climb down the safety ladder to escape.

A camera system is set up throughout the mobile home so you can watch the children from outside the trailer on the television screen. The trailer has a control room that operates a "smoke" system that puts out fake smoke. It can also play sound effects such as lightening, rain and hail sounds.

Smoke is released into the Safety Trailer to teach children how to crawl under and through the smoke and escape. By practicing, the children will have a better idea how to actually respond if an emergency happens.

The Safety Trailer is a very fun, interesting tool that keeps kids entertained while teaching them fire safety.

The volunteers from Goodland Fire Department, Chris Zimmerman and Michael Dorn, did an excellent job teaching the children and keeping them entertained. Some of the St. Francis Fire Department volunteered to come help with the demonstration as well. Gerald Lauer, George Harper, and Shannon Grover all helped teach the Head Start students.

All of the children had a lot of fun, and it was a wonderful opportunity for the preschool students to learn more about fire safety! The Head Start class was very thankful that the firefighters took the time to come to their school.

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